



**Boys &
Girls Aid**

February 21, 2017

Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Vera Stoullil, Chief Operating Officer of Boys & Girls Aid. I am writing to request that you please support the OYA requested budget, which includes a critical rate increase for Behavioral Rehabilitation Service (BRS) programs. It is critical for the youth who must have BRS programs to succeed.

Our organization knows firsthand the negative impact insufficient rates has on programs youth need. We operated our Pettygrove program for nearly 30 years, serving young women ages 13- 18. We provided them the support, structure and accountability needed to help them with their transition back to their families and communities. We recently had to close this high performing program that was achieving tremendous outcomes for youth served, due to the insufficient rates.

I have worked for Boys & Girls Aid for 16 years, and the day I had to sit with staff and young people and tell them the program was closing was one of the most difficult days of my tenure. The young women served shared the profound impact the program and had on them and the unbearable loss they felt not only for themselves, but for the young women in the future that were now losing that resource.

A 16 month process of 3 state agencies, youth, advocates, CCO's and providers identified a 30% rate gap between current rates and what it costs to serve these youth. The Governor's Recommended Budget has included a rate increase for OYA providers. 23 Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) contracts have been given back to OYA and DHS in the last 48 months because of low rates, which are exacerbated by extremely challenging regulatory oversight and risk management for highly traumatized children and their behaviors.

A tremendous burden has been placed on private agencies to deliver on core services for the state agencies, without adequate resources. If this need is not addressed, the service system needed will continue to deteriorate.

Respectfully,

Vera Stoullil
Chief Operating Officer